



MADURA MANI IYER

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By "Kausika"

Creative imagination or Manodharma, and adherence to tradition—*Sampradaya*—are the two essential characteristics of Carnatic music which distinguish it from other systems of music. A South Indian musician who is lacking in either of these qualities cannot hope to become a front-rank artist.

Madura Mani is one of the few creative artists in the field of Carnatic music to-day who combine in themselves loyalty to tradition with extraordinary wealth of imagination. Mani was born in Madura 'with music in his blood' in a family which produced the great Pushpavanam Iyer. He is indeed a musical prodigy and although he is the youngest of our musicians (he is only thirty-three) he has been one of our "big guns" for many years.

Mani underwent *Gurukulavasa* under several musicians of repute, the last of them being the late Sri Muthia Bhagavatar, but it is difficult to say if any of them was particularly responsible for the new style he has developed. He is undoubtedly an original artist and his style is a product of his own genius and fertile imagination.

'Sruti' has been called "the Mother of Music." The meticulous care Mani takes in the matter of attuning his voice to the Sruti has been both the delight and despair of audiences. He does not proceed with his music until his voice has perfectly coalesced with the Sruti.

Mani's music is essentially of the soft, dulcet type. One should not look to him for feats of voice culture, for wild raptures, awe-inspiring manipulations of pace or *tala* acrobatics. But the listener who expects a flow of melody, a rhythmic blending of sounds and the infinitely musical 'something' which thrills the ears and touches the heart will not go unrewarded. For, Mani's *gamakas*, which are an integral part of our melodic expression, are graceful and gliding. He brings out

with minimum of effort the individuality and the subtle shades and nuances of each *raga* he sings.

Mohana, Kambhoji, Shanmukhapriya and Simhendramadhyamam are some of the well-known *ragas* which have received his characteristic imprint; his Mohana particularly is unique.

Mani's forte, as is well-known, is his extraordinary capacity for singing *kalpanaswaras*. He has developed this branch of music to an exquisite degree of perfection. The wealth of imagination he displays, the perfect ease with which he spins his swara-combinations which will baffle a lesser musician, and the scholarship and powers of technique with which he renders them have been in a very large measure responsible for his great popularity to-day. He does not pass from one *swara* to another as most of the musicians do but glides with the ease of a swan, each *swara* acting as a '*anuswara*' to the next. Every *swara* is there in its niche only to lose its individuality in the harmonising correlation he presents. But he most often succumbs to the temptation of singing *kalpanaswaras* for each and every piece he handles, and this, it must be said, he overdoes. This overdoing of but a secondary aspect cannot but be at the cost of elaboration of pure *raga bhava* which is the soul of Carnatic music. *Sahitya bhava* suffers as well.

Mani has given shape and form to many an *apoorva raga* in which the prolific composer Thyagaraja has given us *kritis*. Of these, Ranjani must be given the first place. Hamsarandi, Purnachandrika and Chittaranjani are some of the minor *ragas* in which he is equally at home.

There is a main charge against him that he does not present *ragas* as a complete whole but renders them as scissored bits. This is attributed to his lack of stamina and endurance

of breath; it is indeed an unfortunate handicap.

South Indian music is in the hands of a few musicians—of whom Ma-

dura Mani is one of the most representative. Let us preserve them and our noble heritage, the Carnatic Sangitha.

SOVIET CINEMA THEATRES

By Oleg Leonidov

Moving pictures have become a favourite form of diversion among all peoples of the Soviet Union and the producers are anxious to get their films to every part of the country. Pictures were sent by plane, for example, from Archangel to Narianmar and from there by reindeer sledge to the remote Nenets villages in Tundra. There the inhabitants were shown Mark Don-skoi's "Unbowed", Friedrich Em-ler's "Great Turning Point", being the story of the great Stalinist plan for the battle that turned the tide of the war; Alexander Zarkhi's and Joseph Heifitz's "Member of the Government", which tells the story of an ordinary Russian peasant woman who merited the love and respect of her people and was elected Deputy to the Supreme Soviet; and Ivan Pyryev's musical comedy "Reunion in Moscow".

The village club houses in the Alma Ata region of Kazakhstan are running a cinema festival for Kazakh farmers, including both education and documentary films, in addition to the usual run. Among them we find Grigori Roshal and Efim Erons' "Songs of Abai", being on Abai Kunanbayev, a great Kazakh poet and thinker of the past century; the documentary "Liberation of Czechoslovakia"; films on Ivan Paslov and the naturalist Ivan Michurin; among the popular scientific films shown at the festival were cultivation of fruit orchards, wheel tractors and others which will help farmers to introduce modern methods of farming.

The district has four portable cinematographs to bring films out to the farmers in the field.

Similar festivals were held in the countryside districts all over the country, at the machine and tractor

stations and in district centres. Wherever there were popular scientific films shown they were accompanied by lectures by teachers of the agricultural schools.

Great attention is given to the special children's theatres which have won wide popularity among the little ones. The "Rodina" movie in Leningrad, for instance, offers films on geography, nature study and history. The audience expressed unqualified approval of such films as "Suvorov" by Vsevolod Pudovkin, "Kutuzov" by Vladimir Petrov and "Chapayev" by Georgi and Sergei Vasiliev.

Actors, writers, fliers and heroes of the Soviet Union are invited to come and speak to children in the foyer and the reading room of the theatre. The theatre has a permanent exhibition of educational films and performances are given by children's amateur art circles. On Sundays the average attendance is as high as 3,500.

The little theatre in the factory city of Orekhovo-Zuevo had a total attendance of eleven million in the past ten years. It has run twelve cinema festivals and won the Red Banner for the "best cinema" seventeen times.

There are 28,000 cinemas in the USSR to-day. By 1950 there are to be 46,700. These theatres will be located not only in the district and regional centres but in small villages as well. By 1950 there will be 215 new theatres in the districts that suffered under the German occupation and there will be 92 new movie houses in the regional and republic centres. This year the number of theatres in Belo-Russia alone is to increase to 560, a majority of them in the villages and rural districts of the republic.